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## CRITICISMS AND DISCUSSIONS.

### IMMORTALITY AND MONADISTIC IDEALISM.

The problem of immortality is normally central in a cosmology which conceives of the universe as a spiritual system. Is the spiritual system fundamentally and inevitably personal: a person or a society of persons? Are the careers of finite individuals but passing episodes in a timeless system, or its eternal constituents? In all these problems the issue of immortality is squarely raised. Failure to meet this issue squarely has involved many an idealistic theory in ambiguity and confusion.

Hegel's apparent indifference to the question of immortality, a source of surprise to many a student, is, in the view of Dr. McTaggart,<sup>1</sup> a defect in his philosophy. Dr. McTaggart, himself building on Hegelian foundations, attempts to improve on his master by giving the problem of immortality central place in cosmological discussion. In his *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* he undertakes a metaphysical demonstration of the eternity of finite selves, and in *Some Dogmas of Religion*<sup>2</sup> he examines three of the more usual arguments urged against immortality and also champions human preexistence. The arguments which he advances in support of what he considers human immortality, the vigor with which he advocates the doctrine of the plurality of lives, the atheism to which he is finally led, are all very significant aspects of contemporary idealistic thought. An endeavor will be made in this paper to formulate Dr. McTaggart's theory of immortality and preexistence, and, in the

<sup>1</sup> *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, Cambridge University Press, 1901, pp. 5ff. Cf. Professor Baillie's criticism of Dr. McTaggart's interpretation of Hegel's attitude toward immortality, *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 379f.

<sup>2</sup> London, Edward Arnold, 1906. Chapters III and IV of this work have been reprinted under the title, *Human Immortality and Pre-Existence*, New York, 1915.

light of this theory, to estimate his monadistic<sup>3</sup> interpretation and development of idealism.

## I.

From the point of view of materialistic monism, human spirit is merely one of the ways in which matter operates when it is in the special form of a human body. So regarded, of course, the immortality of the self would be no more credible than the immortality of digestion. But the independent existence of matter, Dr. McTaggart argues in familiar Berkeleian terms, is a perfectly gratuitous and superfluous hypothesis. Science is by no means committed to a materialistic metaphysic. The "laws of nature" may quite as well be conceived as the laws according to which human sensations are related.

We are therefore not bound to regard the self as a mere activity of the body. Still, "granted that my body could not exist except for knowledge, it may be that the knowledge of my body, by myself or other selves, is a necessary condition of the existence of my self."<sup>4</sup> Dr. McTaggart parries the objection to immortality implied in this second supposition as follows. Sensations do seem to involve some corresponding bodily modification; but this proves at the most that *some* body is necessary to my self and that "*while the self has a body, that body is essentially connected with the self's mental life.*"<sup>5</sup> At the death of this my body my self may conceivably transfer its manifestations to another body, either instantaneously or after "a state of suspended animation,"<sup>6</sup> analogous perhaps to dreamless sleep.

Yet, after all, what reason do I have for believing that the self persists while all objects in nature change and pass away? Were the self a mere combination, Dr. McTaggart rejoins, it would be transitory; but, while resembling a combination in that it cannot exist without its parts, it is unlike a combination in that its parts cannot exist without it. It is a complex which cannot disintegrate; it can perish only through annihilation, and we are not justified in contemplating such an eventuality.

In thus meeting the more obvious and usual arguments urged against immortality, Dr. McTaggart has no illusion that he has

<sup>3</sup> The phrase "monadistic idealism," I believe, is Professor Pringle-Pattison's. Cf. *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. V, No. 1, p. 197.

<sup>4</sup> *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

reached positive certainty on the subject. Doubts beset us, and we look for more conclusive assurance. Some seek this assurance in "psychical research." While our author is not prepared to scoff at the ghost-seers, he expects no real proof of immortality from even the most authentic case of apparition. For a man might conceivably, before his death, initiate a chain of circumstances which would cause his apparition to be seen when he himself was really no more. Conclusive proof of immortality can come, if at all, only from metaphysics. If the general nature of reality involved the existence of finite selves, if the existence of finite selves, and of each finite self, were eternally necessary, the recognition of these truths would really assure us of immortality.

Such a metaphysical demonstration of human immortality is undertaken in *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*. All reality is spirit, and "it is the eternal nature of spirit to be differentiated into finite spirits."<sup>7</sup> Can we, in addition, maintain that each finite spirit is eternal—or is each differentiation a step, itself transitory, in an eternal series of differentiations? Moreover, granted the first alternative, is man such a finite spirit? On the answers to these two questions hangs the whole issue of immortality.

Taking the last point first: Are our selves among the fundamental differentiations of spirit? Reality, we learn from Hegel, is characterized by a certain unity of individuals: a unity which is wholly in each of the individuals (else they would lack the requisite reality); yet is not wholly present in each individual separately (else the unity of the individuals would itself be destroyed); nor is it present in the mere assemblage of them (else it would have nothing to do with them as individuals); nor again is it present only in the mutual determination of the individuals (for that would imply that the individuals have meaning of their own apart from the unity). It must be a unity which is wholly in each of the individuals and is the bond which unites them. Unless we adopt this view we are forced to choose between undifferentiated unity (itself meaningless and making experience meaningless) and a plurality of isolated individuals (the inadequate view of the categories of Essence).

"The self answers to the description of the fundamental differentiations of the Absolute. Nothing else which we know or can imagine does so."<sup>8</sup> A self is finite. It is not the only reality in the universe, yet you cannot draw the line separating it from the rest

<sup>7</sup> *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

of the universe. This paradoxical nature of the self is explained only if we regard it as one of the fundamental differentiations of Reality. These differentiations involve the same paradox. Everything is contained in each individual differentiation, yet nothing is contained in each differentiation in such a way as not to be also outside it. "The Absolute must be differentiated into persons, because no other differentiations have vitality to stand against a perfect unity, and because a unity which was undifferentiated cannot exist."<sup>9</sup>

Passing now to the second question: Are our selves eternal? Granted that selves are fundamental differentiations of the Absolute, may it not be that the Absolute is "differentiated by means of an unending succession of individuals, each of whom has only a limited existence in time?"<sup>10</sup> But how is it possible for the selves to perish? The individuals are what they are because of the unity which they embody: each of them is a characteristic embodiment of the nature of the unity. Suppose one of them were to perish, another must take its place. If that other were the same in nature, wherein would it be a different individual? And if it were a really new individual, of a different nature, we should be forced into an absurdity. For, unless we abandon the pure Hegelian view of the absolutely reciprocal relation of the unity and its differentiations, and hold with Lotze the view that the Absolute is something more and deeper than the unity of its differentiations, we are compelled to recognize that a breach in the continuity of the fundamental differentiations would be a breach in the continuity of the Absolute—an unthinkable situation. Breach in continuity is admissible only if we conceive reality as "consisting of moments, of which one may change without affecting the other"<sup>11</sup>—a characteristic of the categories of Essence, especially of the category of Matter and Form, which is transcended in the advance to the categories of the Notion.

Our selves are thus immortal. This conclusion, according to Dr. McTaggart, implies not only the continued existence of the self after death, but its existence before birth. An argument which disproved preexistence would jeopardize immortality. "If the universe got on without me a hundred years ago, what reason could be given for denying that it might get on without me a hundred years hence?"<sup>12</sup> Why is it, then, that the typical Western mind has

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>12</sup> *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 114.

regarded the belief in preexistence as "strange and improbable"?<sup>13</sup> Chiefly because we have no memory of any previous existence of ours. But, according to Dr. McTaggart, personal identity is not a matter of memory; it is an identity of substance. If at my death a self with the same attributes should come into being, the continuity of the attributes would be sufficient to preserve personal identity "not because it would be sufficient if the substance changed, but because it proves that the substance remains unchanged."<sup>14</sup> What we have is not the annihilation of one self and the creation of another, but the continuity of the same self through experiences of so serious a character as death and rebirth.

The doctrine of the plurality of lives should appear reasonable to any believer in immortality. An endless, deathless existence in the future would bear so slight a resemblance to our present life as scarcely to deserve being regarded as its continuation. The adoption of the hypothesis of preexistence, moreover, enables us to explain in a more satisfactory way than is otherwise possible, certain puzzling features of our present life. In the same environment different tendencies and qualities which we ambiguously call innate manifest themselves in different men. These tendencies and qualities are often of the sort which are due in the lives of other men to the condensed results of experience. On the theory of preexistence these tendencies and qualities are naturally explained as being indeed the condensed result of experiences in past lives. This explanation is more satisfactory than the explanation in terms of heredity. Again, the usual explanation of the sudden growth of intimacy in certain personal relations, as due to the capriciousness of sexual desire, is inadequate, since the puzzling sudden intimacy is to be found in friendships which have no connection with sexual desire. "On the theory of preexistence such relations would naturally be explained by the friendships of past lives."<sup>15</sup>

Now, to be sure, unless we had reason to believe that the interests of spirit are so predominant as to find in the long run

<sup>13</sup> *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, pp. 47ff. Cf. Lotze, *Metaphysic*, Section 245 (English translation, 2d ed., Oxford, 1887, Vol. II, p. 182). Dr. McTaggart attributes the characteristic Western indifference or hostility to this doctrine to the attitude of the Christian Church which has championed immortality and ignored preexistence, although, in his belief, the former involves the latter, and although there is apparently nothing in preexistence incompatible with fundamental Christian dogma. Cf. also *Some Dogmas in Religion*, pp. 112ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 51.

<sup>15</sup> *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 121.

satisfaction, it would be impossible to see how a love constituting the chief value and meaning of a person's life could have its way after death: how two could love again unless chance brought them once more together, or how a love denied fruition could remain unextinguished through eons of separation and new activities. (Though, to be sure, this embarrassment of love would seem to be the case whether we believed in preexistence or in the more usual conception of immortality.) Dr. McTaggart himself insists that the significance of love for spirit is very great, indeed that love is the finality and the perfect manifestation of the Absolute.<sup>16</sup> He is therefore inclined to believe that love is not the effect of proximity in personal relations, but its cause.

From this way of viewing the universe *sub specie amati*<sup>17</sup> Reality is seen as essentially spiritual; it manifests itself as eternal selves. The Absolute is a system of selves-in-relation. Now, then, the question arises, If finite selves are eternal, is the eternal Absolute a self? It is a unity of persons, Dr. McTaggart answers, but a unity or community of persons need not itself be personal. To be sure, the Hegelian Dialectic does not explicitly deny personality to the Absolute. That the Absolute may be a self remains possible under certain conditions, some of which Lotze attempts to point out in his *Microcosmus*.<sup>18</sup> Lotze regards the opposition of the ego to a non-ego, not as essential, but rather as a limitation, to personality. In the being of the Infinite we do not find this limitation;

<sup>16</sup> *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 285: "The Absolute can only be perfectly manifested in a state of consciousness which complies with three conditions. It must have an absolute balance between the individual for whom all reality exists, and the reality which is for it—neither being subordinated to the other, and the harmony being ultimate. It must be able to establish such a unity between the self and the not-self, that the latter loses all appearance of contingency and alienation. And, finally, in it the separate and unique nature of each individual must be found in its connections with other individuals. We have found that knowledge and volition comply with none of these conditions. There remains only one other alternative at present known to us—love. I have tried to show that in this case all three conditions are fulfilled." The love of which Dr. McTaggart speaks is not "love of Truth, or Virtue, or Beauty, or anything else whose name can be found in a dictionary"; nor sexual desire; nor love of God, for God is not a personal unity; nor yet "benevolence, even in its most impassioned form" or widest extent, for we cannot love "an indefinitely extended Post Office Directory." He means rather "passionate, all-absorbing, all-consuming love, . . . the love for which no cause can be given, and which is not determined by any outer relation, of which we can only say that two people belong to each other—the love of the *Vita Nuova* and of *In Memoriam*." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 260, 289, 290, 291.) So Dante, in the last line of the *Paradiso*: "L'Amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle."

<sup>17</sup> *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 280.

<sup>18</sup> Book IX, Chapter IV (English translation, Edinburgh, 4th ed., Vol. II, pp. 659ff, especially pp. 678ff). Cf. *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, pp. 64ff.

accordingly perfect personality is in God only: our personalities are but pale copies thereof. But, while the consciousness of a non-ego (that is, in Hegelian terms, the consciousness of another ego) does not constitute personality, Dr. McTaggart insists that it is an essential condition of personality. The unity of the finite self, "by virtue of its simplicity and indivisibility . . . excludes its differentiation from itself in one sense, while including them in another. But the Absolute cannot exclude its differentiations from itself in any sense."<sup>19</sup>

To be sure, if we broadened the term "personality" to cover all spiritual unities, then we could speak of the Absolute as a person. But, in the first place, this would rob us of a term for personality in the narrower sense, in exchange for the dubious advantage of giving us two terms for spiritual unity. And, in the second place, it would justify us in calling "every college, every goose-club, every gang of thieves"<sup>20</sup> a person. Moreover, we are not bound to say that the impersonality of the Absolute makes it lower than a person. A finite individual's perfection is the perfection of a person. The Absolute's perfection is the perfection of a system or community of persons. The two are complementary. The Absolute is spirit, and "all Spirit is personal, but it is many persons, not one person, although it is as really one Spirit as it is many persons."<sup>21</sup>

## II.

This theory is indubitably and explicitly atheistic. To be sure, the majority of theists believe in immortality, and the majority of the believers in immortality are theists, and the usual view has been that unless one believes in God one cannot believe in the immortality of the soul. Dr. McTaggart sees no logical connection between the two beliefs. Indeed, far from strengthening the belief in immortality, consistent theism weakens it. If we postulate a Creator of the souls of men (on the supposition that finite beings could not have existed from all eternity) the belief in immortality is jeopardized. If my role in the universe is such that it does not involve my existence from all eternity, how can it be shown that it involves my existence to all eternity?<sup>22</sup> To be sure, that God, a benevolent Creator, should destroy, or allow to be destroyed, a human soul which

<sup>19</sup> *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 83.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>22</sup> *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 277.



He has once created, may be an evil; but there is evil in the universe, and it may include this particular variety, for all that we are assured to the contrary.<sup>23</sup> The more one recognizes the eternity of finite selves, the less necessity one sees for postulating a Creator of selves, and the less real does the theist's God appear. Thus we are led from the original view that atheism precludes the belief in immortality, to the view that it is rather theism which weakens the belief, and that the assurance of immortality consistently involves atheism.

The term atheism, used in connection with an idealistic system, need not appear strange. This position, defended unambiguously by Dr. McTaggart, is, in his opinion, similar to the position of Fichte in his earlier system and to the position of Hegel.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Lotze, whom our author considers "of all the theists of the nineteenth century . . . philosophically the most important . . . regards immortality as quite undemonstrable and as very doubtful."<sup>25</sup> The view before us is thus the precise reverse of Lotze's. The only kind of God that Dr. McTaggart would admit at all is a non-omnipotent and non-creative one; and he sees "only one reason why we should not believe in his existence—namely, that there is no reason why we should believe in it."<sup>26</sup>

The Absolute, then, is not a self. It is a society of selves, a unity of persons perfectly manifested in love—a sort of College.<sup>27</sup> Selfhood and the love of selves are no passing phases of reality; they are the heart of the universe. Each finite self is a unique differentiation of the Absolute and is therefore imperishable as a finite self. Apparently we are offered genuine immortality in this theory; even more, preexistence as well: the assurance of personal identity throughout. But on what terms? Not in terms of memory. I shall continue to exist after death as a self, but I-myself-here-present shall not then be aware of the fact. My self's successor will be myself, not because he remembers my experience and recognizes them as his own, but because of a substantial bond uniting the two life-spans, which makes my later life-character share in the

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>24</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* (Cf. *Microcosmus*, Book. IX, Chapters IV-V, also *Metaphysic*, Section 245.)

<sup>26</sup> *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 260.

<sup>27</sup> R. R. Marett dubs it "Trinity basking in a perpetual Long Vacation"; see *Mind*, N. S., No. 43, July, 1902, p. 391.

nature of the former. My self's successor will be just what I would have been in his place; in short, he will be myself.

Continuity of consciousness, and the consciousness of continuity, are thus renounced. But can one dispense so readily with the factor of memory? As Bradley puts it, "The man in the past or in the future who knows nothing about me, whatever else he is, after all will not be myself. . . . That what we have done in this life may cause our future love might be true, and yet, if nothing is remembered, individual continuance might to us then mean nothing."<sup>28</sup> Dr. McTaggart would say that, while the second self will not feel that it is the same as the first, it will nevertheless be the same. One might well retort that, since the second self will not feel that it is the same as the first, it might as well not be the same.

Theists, believing that each man lives his one life on earth and is thereafter immortal, have been confronted with the difficulty of contemplating the immense assembly of spirits that would thus be accumulated through the ages. William James, while he urges us to be forbearing and democratically tolerant with the endless throng of fellow-immortals, realizes the mental enormity of the task. "The very heavens themselves, and the cosmic times and spaces, would stand aghast. . . . at the notion of preserving eternally such an ever-swelling plethora and glut of it."<sup>29</sup>

On Dr. McTaggart's theory we are perhaps spared this hardship. Indeed, if selves are the fundamental differentiations of the Absolute, if their interrelated activities and loves constitute the Absolute system itself, how can we admit an increase in their number? An increase in the number of selves would involve an increase of the universe. The entire position of Dr. McTaggart would be menaced by the possibility of one real self's *beginning* its career in time. We thus seem compelled to accept the doctrine that the number of selves-in-relation constituting the universe is constant. The eternal existence of human individuals on earth, however, can scarcely be admitted; we are, moreover, assured that their number has been on the increase for some time. Are we to be asked, then, to conclude that multitudes of us have drunk the waters of forgetfulness in non-terrestrial regions before being re-born here on earth, and that this immigration of selves on a large scale is going on all the time? And is one to presume also that the self-in-transit is in a state of "suspended animation," and that

<sup>28</sup> *Essays in Truth and Reality*, Oxford, 1914, pp. 455, 457.

<sup>29</sup> *Human Immortality*, 1898, p. 36.

the unsatisfied love-quests of certain souls on earth and their longings for they-know-not-whom are to be explained as due to the failure of certain other loving souls to follow them from one bodily field of operations to another? This difficulty is expressed in the space-time language of every-day speech, but stating the point in Dr. McTaggart's own language of mild immaterialism would not remove the difficulty.

We are involved in further embarrassments. According to the theory before us, the love of two people is "the expression of the ultimate fact that each of them is more closely connected with the other than he is with people in general."<sup>30</sup> The existences of two such people are essentially bound up; they are "bound up with one another, not for one life only, but for ever."<sup>31</sup> Now, it is presumably taken for granted by Dr. McTaggart that a self's character does not admit of its being involved in such intimate communion with more than one person. Otherwise we should have to conceive the possibility of a future Jonathan spurning his David, of a Tennyson finding Hallam tedious. Assume that Dante's communion with Beatrice lacks the eternal character: what is in our way of supposing that Beatrice's lover might not be, in a succession of life-spans, the lover of Laura and of Heloise, and the places of these in the lives of subsequent Petrarchs and Abelards be taken by the Donna of the *Vita Nuova*? Moreover, a Tennyson to whom *In Memoriam* is but something to read, a Dante to whom Beatrice is no more than she is to us—these were odd successors of their former selves!

Yet, grant the undying fire of the kind of love that is glorified in the *Divine Comedy*, grant Hallam's permanent appeal, it may yet be retorted that these are, after all, quite exceptional. Are we, then, to think that the usual interrelations of selves involve a plurality of loves in a plurality of lives? Perhaps this view is not altogether outside Dr. McTaggart's horizon. Tastes change; as he remarks in a somewhat different connection, "a Viking or a Maori warrior might well find that the prospect of an immortality without fighting made the universe intolerable."<sup>32</sup> But in the course of time his demands may change. And so may his love. One of the last merits which our author finds in the plurality of lives is that it affords an opportunity for an eternal variety of self-activity. "We cannot spend our youth both in the study and in the saddle. . . . We cannot

<sup>30</sup> *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 136.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

learn the lessons alike of Galahad and of Tristram and of Caradoc. And yet they are all so good to learn. Would it not be worth much to be able to hope that what we missed in one life might come to us in another?"<sup>33</sup> It is perhaps not absurd to suppose that a self, careering in turn through the life-experiences of a Tristram, a Galahad, a Caradoc, will not keep on realizing his life's meaning and value in the same Iseult—unless indeed the nature of the latter exemplified love's perennial adaptability.

Dr. McTaggart is quite willing to admit that the love of two people for each other "would not involve their meeting in every life, any more than it would involve their meeting every day of each life. Love can survive occasional absences, and is often even stronger for them. And . . . the universe is on a large scale, which might require long absences."<sup>34</sup> But even on this supposition the hardship remains. Granting the likelihood of periodic resumption of the "passionate, all-absorbing, all-consuming love"<sup>35</sup> uniting two selves, what of the lifelong intervals of lovelessness? On Dr. McTaggart's estimate of the significance of love for self, this embarrassment appears very serious.

These perplexities involved in the view of the world *sub specie amati* only suggest the real difficulties in Dr. McTaggart's monadistic idealism. Perhaps the fundamental source of them all is to be found in his determination to equate reality with selfhood, and in his conception of selfhood. The cosmic process is described by him as consisting entirely of the interrelated activities of selves. This type of idealism is involved in an ambiguous account of the resistantly impersonal nature-medium in which selves seem to operate, and in a correspondingly ambiguous account of selfhood and personal identity.

Following in Berkeleian paths, Dr. McTaggart proves to his own satisfaction that "matter is only an appearance to the mind which observes it."<sup>36</sup> This view, in the way in which it is presented, is inadequate, not in that it is entirely false, but in that it is incomplete. It is only half a view. The statement that matter cannot exist independently of spirit or, to be more precise in this particular connection, independently of selfhood, is true only in so far as it is completed by its corollary converse. If matter cannot

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>35</sup> *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 260.

<sup>36</sup> *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 83; cf. pp. 79ff.

exist independently of selves, it is because it is not a self-subsistent reality but one fundamental factor in the cosmic process of experience, which it does not exhaust, but which "selfhood" likewise does not exhaust.

To be consistent, Dr. McTaggart should have followed his negative answer to the question, Is my self an activity of my body? by a somewhat different answer than the one he gives to the question, Is my present body an essential condition of the existence of my self?<sup>37</sup> Had the latter question read: "Is my present body an essential condition of the existence of my present self?" it would be difficult to see the possibility of an intelligent negative answer. But Dr. McTaggart, viewing the continual change of bodies, views the self as continuously identical. He can conceive of one self as the tenant of several bodies in succession; but it must be the same tenant notwithstanding. Now we may ask: Is not the self inevitably a tenant of some sort? That is to say, is not an impersonal material medium or "body-appearance" of some sort as indispensable to its selfhood as is intercourse with other selves? It is surely as indispensable to the only kind of selfhood of which we have any knowledge.

Dr. McTaggart does not exactly evade the issue, but he does not meet it squarely. He recognizes that "no self can be conceived as conscious unless it has sufficient data for its mental activity."<sup>38</sup> But, he argues, "it does not follow, because a self which has a body cannot get its data except in connection with that body, that it would be impossible for a self without a body to get data in some other way."<sup>39</sup> That is to say, it does not follow, because a conscious self requires sufficient data for its mental activity, that a non-conscious self need be similarly limited. This may be incontestable; but what is the content or the nature of the "non-conscious self" so conceived? Are the fundamental differentiations of the Absolute, in Dr. McTaggart's view, "conscious" or "non-conscious," in the above meaning of these two terms? Dr. McTaggart concedes that "*while the self has a body*, that body is essentially connected with the self's mental life."<sup>40</sup> This concession is misleading and insufficient. Working for the time being on the theory that the fundamental differentiations of the Absolute are selves, we are bound to say: If mental life is not essential to selfhood, it matters com-

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79ff, 103ff.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

paratively little for our purposes whether a body be essentially connected with that mental life; but, if mental life is indeed essential to selfhood, then the phrase "*while* the self has a body" is unwarranted.

The important question, after all, is whether a "mental life" (in the above sense) is a *sine qua non* of selfhood. In a universe described as fundamentally a society of selves, what is the role and the content of the self "in a state of suspended animation in the interval between its possession of its two bodies"?<sup>41</sup> How is it related to selves-with-bodies and to other selves "in a state of suspended animation"? Moreover, how is the reality of these two bodies to be conceived? If we cannot say, in Dr. McTaggart's phrase, that the self in suspended animation "has" either of these two bodies, how are they at all real, if body, or matter, as we have been told already, is "only an appearance to the mind which observes it"?<sup>42</sup> To what mind are two such bodies present as appearance? Perhaps to a mind regarding them as the no-more and the not-yet body of the self in suspended animation? But, in that case, we must admit that selves-with-bodies may be in relation with selves in suspended animation. On this alternative Dr. McTaggart should give more countenance to "psychical research" and kindred phenomena than he appears inclined to do. Indeed, it is not easy to see precisely what is intended in the theory before us by a self "in a state of suspended animation."

The philosophy of Dr. McTaggart is an attempted revision of Hegelian idealism in personalistic terms; yet in its very conception of personality it fails to utilize one of the chief gains of nineteenth-century idealism, and, instead of advancing beyond Hegel, it retreats to the pre-Kantian substantialist views of the self. To Dr. McTaggart the self, whose identity he traces and whose immortality and preexistence he champions, is not fundamentally a transcendental unity of apperception or any other kind of conscious unity. The identity is an identity of substance, the preexistence and immortality are the preexistence and immortality of a continuous self-identical entity. The hand is the hand of Hegel, but the voice is the voice of "rational psychology" and the scholastic simple substance.

Yet Dr. McTaggart recognizes and insists on "the continuous development of the self."<sup>43</sup> But is this continuous development a development of the very essence of the self? Hegel's identity is

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 52.

an identity of process, an identity, not in spite of, but in and through, change and differences. For Dr. McTaggart personal identity is in the last resort an identity of substance. In all changes "there is an aspect which is permanent and unchanging, and it is on that aspect that our attention is fixed when we speak of identity of attributes through change."<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, the self's identity is not affected by its migrations from body to body, nor by the periodic snapping of the thread of memory and consciousness generally. All these circumstances are really external. The very fact that there is no evidence of the continuous persistence of these is, to Dr. McTaggart, a proof that they are not, after all, fundamental. "We may lay down a general principle as to the continuity of external circumstances from life to life," he writes. "In so far as it is necessary to the continuous development of the self, it will be present. In so far as it is not present, we may be sure that it is not required for the continuous development of the self."<sup>45</sup>

The above passage partakes of the dogmatic. *What*, after all, are all these selves which are solemnly declared to be the fundamental differentiations of the Absolute, but of which no known experience seems to be fundamental? Dr. McTaggart speaks of Reality as a society of selves, a system of personal relations, but his selves and persons are really monads, substantial entities. Hence the unreal character of what he represents to us as personal identity and continuance, immortality and preexistence. These scarcely seem to concern the concrete living self of experience. It is difficult to see "what special interest a man can take in the unknown series of those who are to inherit his soul-substance, any more than in the equally unknown series of those who had the usufruct of it before him."<sup>46</sup>

Leibniz's monads are self-complete individuals, but the totality of them does not form a cosmos. Dr. McTaggart's monadism would overcome the difficulty which Leibniz tried, and failed, to meet with his preestablished harmony, by conceiving of the finite individuals constituting the universe as selves. Selves, being necessarily in relation, do form a cosmos. But Dr. McTaggart's selves, conceived in too substantialist terms, fail to allow for an adequate recognition of the actuality of the impersonal factors in the world of self-activity, or for an adequate interpretation of the metaphysical role and significance of consciousness.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>46</sup> Professor Pringle-Pattison in *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. V, No. 1, p. 200.

For a philosopher of experience—for a true idealist—Dr. McTaggart does scant justice to the “nature” factor in experience, and for a consistent immaterialist he lacks the requisite boldness and capacity to ignore the facts of life. His championship of preexistence is brilliant; his critique of theism, searching and to be reckoned with. But his theory of immortality is in the last resort a misnomer. A theory which views the destiny of the finite self in terms of the conservation and attainment of values may conceivably renounce the consciousness of continuity and personal identity after death, so long as the ideal causes with which the self has been identified and in which its whole being has found meaning and worth are assured of continued vitality and fruition, so long as the unique values of a self’s life are being eternally conserved and realized. But if the career of the finite individual is conceived in exclusively existential terms: if immortality of the self is thought of as the eternal continuance of a substantial entity of some sort, then continuity of consciousness and the consciousness of continuity appear indeed indispensable. An eternal continuity of the self’s own existence which does not include the self-consciousness of continuity is, after all, in spite of the most brilliant dialectic, a continuity of too ambiguous a character to deserve the name immortality.

If, in spite of the above difficulties, Dr. McTaggart remains under the impression that his theory demonstrates the eternity of the self’s career, this is clearly due to the fact that throughout his discussion he “substitutes for the living and concrete unity of self-consciousness, as manifested in experience, the numerical unity of a soul-substance or indestructible soul-atom on which the personal unity of experience is supposed to depend, or in which it is somehow housed.”<sup>47</sup> The Love which he regards as the supreme manifestation of Reality is a love of substantial selves which even in this most intimate communion resist real union and remain self-identical and distinctive throughout. His society of selves has no personal character as society; his “college” is in the last analysis an assembly, not a unity. Over-individual systems of selfhood and over-individual values receive inadequate attention in his thought. His conception of immortality and his treatment of God suffer in consequence.

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.